

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A technique transfers data between geographically dispersed entities belonging to a virtual-local-area network (VLAN). According to the technique, geographically dispersed entities communicate via software-defined virtual ports that “appear” as physical  
5 ports to the entities. Each virtual port, in turn, is associated with one or more connections wherein each connection may be associated with one or more VLANs. Data generated on a particular VLAN that is destined for a remote entity is forwarded to a virtual port which, in turn, transfers the data to the remote entity over the connection associated with the VLAN. Moreover, state is maintained at each virtual port for each connection,  
10 thereby enabling the virtual ports to support various protocols that operate with physical ports.